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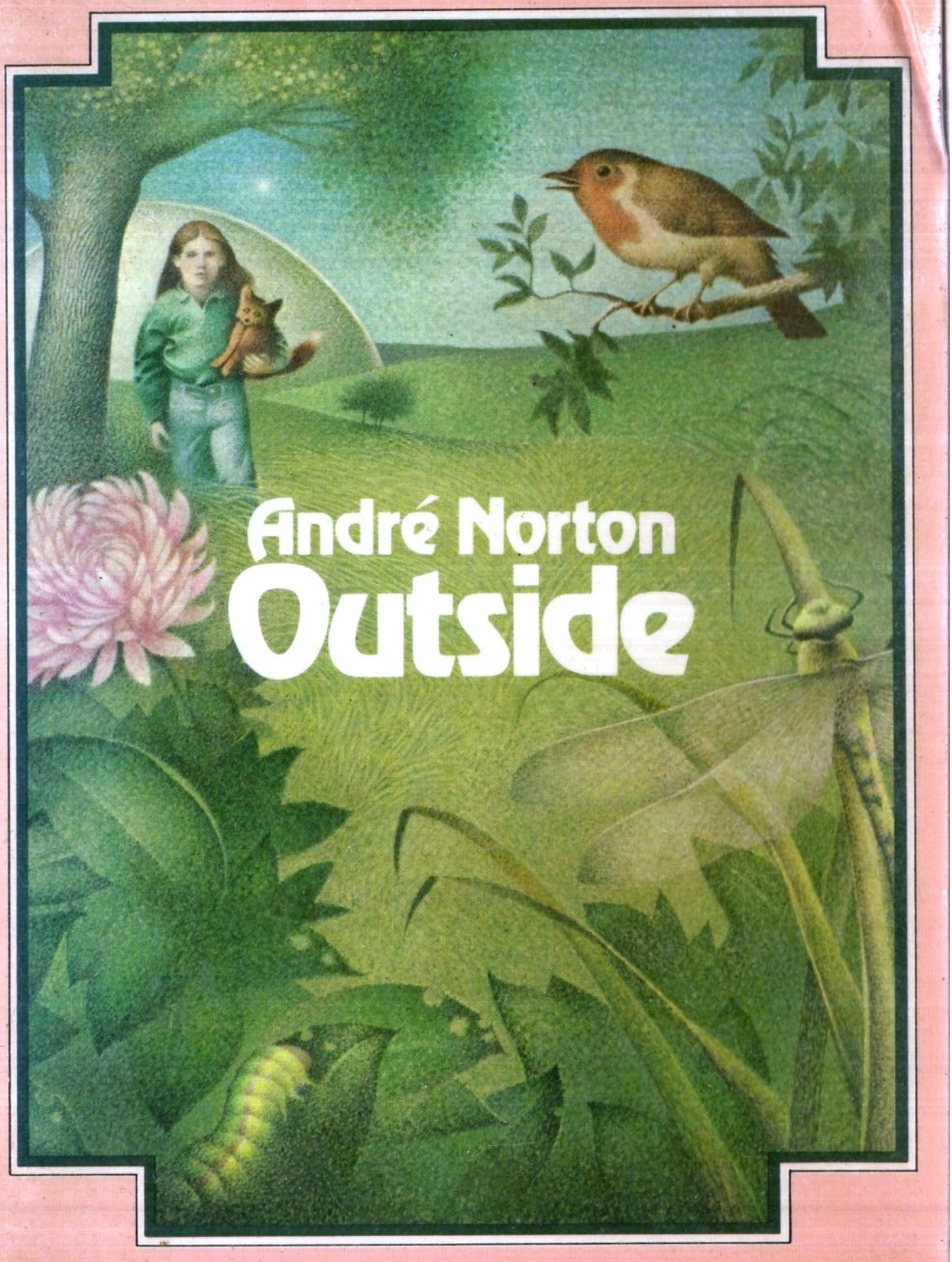
An exciting fantasy of a future Earth



# André Norton
# Outside

OUTSIDE

1

Inside

The city was very large. When Kristie had been one of the real Littles, she used to make herself dizzy by lying on her back and looking up. Far overhead was the dome, sealing in all the buildings. But it was so high above the broken-down wiggle-walk that Kristie only saw it as a dull mist.

Under the dome, the city was widespread. Kristie had never known anyone who had gone clear to either end where there were supposed to be gates to the Outside. Not even one of the Bigs as tall and brave as her brother Lew had seen the gates. There was too much Inside.

Also, the gates were of no use. Long ago, years and years before Kristie had been born and before all the Olds had died of the fever, the gates had been fastened tight and were to stay that way forever. Everyone said Outside was bad. You could not breathe because of the poisoned air. There was nothing left alive anymore.

Once Outside must have been wonderful! Some of the Bigs said that the story tapes about Outside were all lies. They were sure it was different from what the readers showed. But Lew said that this wasn't true. All had been just as the tapes said, only very long ago, before the dome had been put over the city.

Lew liked reading tapes more than most of the Bigs. When Kristie had been little, he had taken her with him to the teaching center where there were tapes for Littles, too. And Lew had run one of the readers just for her while he watched another.

The story tapes were all made up. Lew had explained carefully to her about the difference between a made-up story and what had once been real but was not now. Sometimes Kristie wondered how Lew could be so sure that Outside was gone. If no one had even tried to find the gates or to look out, then how could one be sure? Kristie had her own ideas about what might be there though she never told anyone.

The Olds had all died with the fever. Lew was nine years old when it happened, and Kristie was just a baby. There were only a few Crowds left now—Lew's and Brad's and a couple more Kristie had heard the Bigs talk about.

Each Crowd had their street of homes and their own looting places. Sometimes they visited. But mostly they kept to their own streets. The wiggle-walks, which used to carry people across the city, did not run anymore. And in some places the breathers had broken down, so there was only stale, bad air.

Kristie knew their street and she knew the way to the teaching center very well. She had gone looting twice with Fanna, Peggy and Lew. They hunted canned food and clothing, which proved that the Bigs thought Kristie was not a real Little anymore.

But what lay beyond their own territory? Kristie was not even sure which way one would go to get to a gate and maybe see Outside. However, just the night before she'd had an idea.

Now she sat on the stalled wiggle-walk while she waited for Lew and thought about it.

There were so many tapes in the teaching center. Fanna went there often because she wanted to learn from the tapes how to make sick people well. Lew looked at tapes about how to run old machines and what life used to be like in the city.

Most of the Bigs and Littles of the Crowd did not care much about learning things. They would rather loot or sit around listening to music packs. Lew said they were dummies.

But Kristie was not a dummy. Today she was going to prove it. Somewhere among all the tapes there ought to be one about the city. Perhaps it would show how one could travel from place to place without getting lost. Such a guide must show the gates. If she could learn how to reach one of the gates, then she would go there.

She had to know—she just had to—whether Outside was as Lew said, a place where no one could breathe or live. Or whether it was as the tapes showed—all green, with water running out in the open over the ground. There might be colored flowers, bright as the pieces of cloth the looters found, and furry things—furry things that could be alive!

Kristie could hardly believe the wonder of that, though Lew told her it had once been true. The only furry things alive Inside were rats.

She shivered when she thought of them. Horrid things! The Bigs shot them with stunners whenever they could. But the furry animals on the tapes were not a bit like rats, not in the least.

"Kristie? Ready to go?"

She jumped eagerly to her feet. Lew stood there alone, so she guessed that Fanna was not going today. Lew was growing so tall that, even though he was a Big, he looked like some of the Olds on the tapes. No one could remember just how many birthdays anyone had had. Kristie wasn't even sure she was nine years old, but she did know Lew was a lot older than she.

He had a nice face and he smiled a lot. And the other Bigs listened to him when there was something important to be decided. Lew was the leader of the Crowd, which made him an important person. He wore a stunner and a beam-light on his belt. Today he had on a new shirt, too, which they had found looting. It was red and Kristie thought red was just right for Lew with his dark hair.

Together they went along the wiggle-walk. Kristie could just remember when it was still running. You did not walk then; you did not have to. The wiggle-walk moved and you just stood, or sat in one of the seats scattered along it, and let it carry you. But it had not run for a long time.

"Lew," Kristie gave a skip to catch up with her brother. Sometimes Lew walked too fast, as if he forgot that a person with shorter legs was with him. He must be thinking about something, probably something he wanted to learn more about from one of the tapes. "Lew, why doesn't the wiggle-walk run anymore? Or the elevators go up and down?"

He was frowning, not at her, but because he did not want to think about a problem.

"Because the machines that ran them all broke down," he explained. "And we don't know how to fix them." Then he began to whistle and Kristie knew he did not want to talk about it anymore.

She could guess why. Inside was run by machines. The breathers were machines, too. And the breathers, Kristie shivered—what if all the breathers broke? What would become of the Crowd then? She did not want to think about it; she would not let herself. No, she would think about her plan because, if Outside was not as Lew thought, then they could go there. And they would not have to worry about any old machines breaking down ever again!

Kristie began to sing softly to herself; her words matched Lew's whistling. He never liked music from the bing-bong tapes. Instead he learned tunes from the reading machines, just as she did. This was a nice one. She skip-hopped in time to it as she sang:

*"London Bridge is falling down,*
*Falling down, falling down—"*

Lew looked at her and laughed. "Like that one, do you?" Kristie nodded but did not stop her singing:

*"London Bridge is falling down,*
*My fair lady!"*

Lew reached down and swung her lightly to another wiggle-walk that ran off to the side, a little below the one from their own street. Then he jumped down beside her.

"Where's London?" Kristie asked.

"Across the sea, if it's still there. When the cities were sealed, it was still one of them," Lew told her. "But after the fever we never heard from any of the other cities again. The communication center quarters were sealed. Too many people died in there and then the breather blew. We never got back to the big broadcaster again."

"Across the sea," Kristie repeated. From the tapes she knew what a sea was. A big lot of water, big enough to swallow up the whole city. Yes, she knew what the sea was, but it was hard to picture it in her mind. "I wish I could see the sea."

Lew frowned at her and shook his head. "Never again, Kristie. The cities are all sealed. Outside is poison. There are no breathers there to clean the air, so you would die."

"Why did the Olds make the air poison?"

Lew shrugged impatiently. "You know why, Kristie. They just didn't care. They let all kinds of bad things get into the air. Then, when they began to worry about what was happening, it was already too late to stop. All they could do was seal the cities. That didn't work too well either. Some breathers got bad. And there were sicknesses like the fever to kill the Olds off."

He was walking faster, as if he wanted to leave behind the bad things he could remember.

Kristie, glancing at his face, did not ask any more questions. Sometimes Lew seemed to be far away, even though he was close enough for her to reach out and touch.

They came to the teaching center before Lew spoke again. As they turned in at the big door, he asked:

"What will it be today, Kristie?"

"I don't know. But I can pick for myself, Lew. You know I can run a reader just as well as you can." She wanted a chance to follow her own plan.

"All right. But don't go back home without me—" he warned.

Kristie nodded absently. She was wondering just where, among all the stacks of stored tapes, she could find some about the city. And she was very glad when Lew left her in the lower room and went off to hunt for his own material.

Kristie knew where the history tapes were. She had found some of her Outside ones there. Today she paid no attention to them. Instead she read labels here and there, searching the shelves for tapes about the city itself. And, to her joy, she finally came across a whole section with the proper labelling.

She needed early ones, she was sure. Perhaps she could find one about the sealing of the gates. Kristie made a careful selection, took the early tapes to the nearest reader, and wound the first tape into the machine.

There were three possible tapes but Kristie ran them all to make sure she had the one she wanted. The second one threw a map on the small screen. Kristie pressed the button marked "hold." She had seen maps before and knew they could be used to guide an explorer.

Now she hunched forward eagerly on the very edge of the reader seat, hunting among the map's lines for a place she already knew. There was no explain talk with the picture. Perhaps those who had taped it had not thought it necessary.

Kristie found her starting point, the very building in which she now sat. With her fingertip touching the screen, she began to trace ways branching out from the learning center. Her excitement grew as she saw that the learning center was not far, at least on the map, from a big red dot on the dome wall where it must touch ground surface.

That dot must surely mark a gate!

Kristie had a suspicion that the distance which seemed so short on the pictured map might be much farther when one walked the stalled wiggle-walks. So she traced the map's lines in the other direction, back to the Crowd's own street. Then, with her fingers, she carefully measured the two distances and compared them as best she could.

Why it was only a teeny bit farther, just about the length of her fingernail on the map! Kristie had no idea how far a journey it could be but she guessed it was not too long.

She switched off the map after studying the three turns she must make and counting the

buildings along each track where they were marked off by tiny squares. When the screen went dark, she made herself think about the map in detail. Then she switched the picture on once more to compare it with her remembered lines and squares. She had been right, recalling every bit of it!

Kristie slid off the reader seat and walked softly down the corridor of stored tapes. She could hear the steady murmur of a reader voice long before she pushed between two tall cases to peer at Lew.

He sat with his back to her, gazing steadily at the lighted screen and its pictures and listening to what seemed to be a very boring explanation about machines. Lately Lew had been more and more interested in such tapes. She wondered if he were trying to learn how to start the stalled machines. Perhaps so. There must be tapes which would tell how to do that.

However, she was more interested in the fact that he had a pile of tapes to be fed into the reader. It was plain he planned to stay for some time yet. Time enough for her to visit the gate?

Kristie was not sure. Only the longer she stayed here, just watching Lew, the more time she was wasting. So she turned and ran on tiptoe back down the long hall and out into the empty street.

This way! She turned left and hurried along, putting as much distance between herself and the learning center as she could. And as fast as she could. When she turned the second corner she slowed down a little.

It was very quiet here. Even the constant sighing of the breathers sounded faint and far away. Kristie slowed even more. Were the breathers stopped in the section through which she must pass? Well, if they were, she could turn back easily enough.

No, this was her chance to see, truly see, if there was a way Outside, and if Outside was what Lew said—all dead forever and ever. Squaring her shoulders, Kristie marched ahead, determined to learn the truth for herself.

## 2

## Shadows by the Gate

Here it was so lonely, so quiet—so—so— Kristie's chin was firm. No, she was not afraid of this strange part of the city. Maybe she had never been alone before between these very tall and silent buildings where the windows looked back at you like great blank eyes. But really, this was just like the street where the Crowd lived. It was!

Only—she licked her lips and clenched her hands into fists. This was silly. Just what a Little would do—believe that now and then something peered down at her from a window, only to flash away when she glanced up. There was no one here!

Her feet made a padding sound on the dusty surface of the dead wiggle-walk. Here was the second corner where she must turn. For a moment Kristie paused and shut her eyes to recall the map picture as fully as she could. The fact that she could call it firmly to mind when she

did this was reassuring.

Beyond was another row of tall buildings. But at ground level were the wide shop windows. Kristie was drawn by the sight of them. Why, these still had things in the windows! Another time she might have gone looting. But she did not have the time now, not if she were to reach the gate place and be back before Lew discovered she was gone.

Her walk became a trot. She jogged along between the tempting windows, not allowing herself to examine too closely what they held. There was an echo from the thud of her feet which she did not like to hear. The sounds were strange, almost like those of the bam drum Fred liked to pound. As if something back behind those walls were drumming.

Kristie reached the second branching she must follow and stood staring ahead. There was no wiggle-walk such as threaded through the rest of the city. No, the pavement was solid, as if part of the buildings had flowed out to form it.

Also, there was no real wall to her right, just a line of narrow rods taller than she, with spaces left between them. All were locked together, top and bottom, by bars. Beyond them spread a wide-open space covered with strange, dead stuff, some of it standing tall, some matted on the ground. All was grey-brown.

Kristie approached the fenced place cautiously, wanting to see the matted stuff more closely. Perhaps these had once been growing things. She could trace trunks, branches, and long dead, dried grass.

*Outside!*

Then her first wild excitement quickly died. No, there was another way beyond. This was nothing but a small piece of open space in the city itself. There was nothing green and growing as the reading tapes had shown. All was dead.

Kristie pushed her hand between the rods and reached in as far as she could to touch a tuft of grass. The blades powdered in her grasp. She jerked back and wiped her fingers on her jeans, wanting to get rid of the queer gritty stuff clinging to her skin.

Once the Olds must have tried to bring some of the Outside in. Then the growing things died. Maybe they just could not live Inside. Kristie ran her hand along the fence as she walked on. Trees and grass and bushes. She knew their names from the reading tapes and was able to distinguish each one. But all were long dead.

Seeing them dead made her feel queer. She had a hurting in her throat and her eyes smarted. What was the matter with her? Crying just like a Little because of some old dead things? She would not look at them anymore, she just would not!

Kristie focused her eyes straight ahead and moved out into the center of the solid way.

However, before she reached the end of the fence guarding the dead place, Kristie heard a sound. She swung around and looked back at the mass of dead plants and trees. There was a rustling. The noise came from the railed place and was moving towards her.

Kristie uttered a small cry of fright. She did not know exactly what she feared might be hiding in that wasteland; she only knew that she did not want to see it! Turning, she ran over the hard surface of the solid road.

She gasped as she made a last turn to the left, rounding the end of the fence. It seemed hard to get full breaths. The blood pounded so heavily in her ears that Kristie was not sure she could hear the sighing of the breathers. She slowed to listen for the puff-puff of renewed air. Also—for the sound behind her.

There—she caught the hiss of breather air but it did not sound too even. Kristie frowned. She did not dare go on if the breathers were not good. But to go back was to fail.

Also, she thought grimly, to go back meant that she would have to repass the place of dead things. Perhaps she would even have to face what had been crawling towards her.

Kristie rubbed her hands across her sweating face. On or back? She could not just stand here forever.

The breathers were still going. They sounded slow, as if they were running down, but they were going. And right now it was easier for Kristie to head on than to turn back and see what had been moving from the dead place.

All the past experience of the Crowd cautioned her to go slowly, so that she would not use up any more air than she had to. Even if the breathers were to quit right now, she would still have enough air to get back to a safer position in the city.

She listened for any sound above the regular swish-swish which had always been a part of her life. No, nothing. Perhaps whatever hid in that dead place would not come into the open.

By now she should be close to the gate. Kristie walked on. She listened and watched for signs that showed she was nearing her goal.

Yes!

The buildings ended. Before her was just a black greyness where the city dome curved down to meet the ground. However, breaking that curve was what must have once been an opening that was far taller than Lew and wider than the street.

But—

Kristie's vast disappointment was like being suddenly plunged into a black dark room. Across the door were wide lengths of metal welded to the frame on the top and bottom. None of the Crowd, not even Lew with his knowledge of machines, could ever hope to break through.

And there was no window in the dome so that she could see what lay on the other side of the sealed gate. Outside was gone forever.

It was only when Kristie realized this that she knew how much she had counted on there being a way out, some way of proving that the reader tapes were true. The truth must be just

as Lew said. Outside was dead, killed as dead as the things she had seen only moments before. There was really no world left except Inside. The reading tapes were now all lies!

Kristie made herself go to the tall, wide gate. She put her hands on the bars that sealed it. They were real; her hopes were not.

The lump in her throat and the smarting in her eyes grew stronger. No! She was *not* going to cry. And she must never, never let anyone know how silly she had been. If Fred, Sally, Kate and that horrid Bill ever knew she believed the tapes and thought she could get Outside, they would all laugh at her.

Kristie scowled. She made a fist and pounded once against the sealing bar. Her gesture was answered by a faint hollow ring. And then came another sound which was not an echo.

She whirled about, her eyes wide with a fear which made her shiver. Her back was now to the gate. She could see clearly what was coming towards her, moving in short determined rushes. Kristie screamed.

For a long moment she was frozen in sheer terror, then she made herself move. If only she had a stunner, a bar, anything with which to face this enemy!

They were wary, approaching along shadowy places, spreading out from the dead plants. There were so many that Kristie could not count them. Grey, their teeth exposed in grins of hunger, their eyes showing red. Rats!

"No!" Kristie screamed again.

She dared not run through the lines drawing in around her. There were too many of them and they were so large! She dared not even take her eyes from them long enough to find a refuge. If she did, they might rush her.

"Lew!" Even as she screamed his name Kristie knew her voice could not reach across all the ways and buildings. Still, in the past Lew had always been there, standing between her and any danger.

She slipped along the dome's side until she came up, with a jar, against a building. Because she had nowhere else to go, Kristie now set her shoulders against it and slid along. Perhaps there was a doorway. She dared to flash a glance away from the vicious enemy and looked to her right.

Yes! There was a break in the wall. Not the door she had hoped for, but a window at the height of her shoulder. Kristie leaped for it. She had to turn her back on the rats to scramble up to whatever safety the window might offer.

There was a sharp pain in her leg. Kristie screamed again. But with a last frantic effort she pulled herself up, slamming against a slightly recessed pane of glass. It cracked and splintered. She clung, kicking at it, unmindful of any cuts. The rats squealed so wildly she could hear them as she fought against the glass barrier.

Pieces of the glass dropped from the frame. But Kristie could not enter the room beyond

because there was a second smooth barrier behind the glass. She beat against it in vain. She had a narrow ledge on which to crouch and that was all.

Sobbing, Kristie edged around. The rats gathered thickly below, their heads upturned, their red eyes fixed on her. Now and then one made a determined leap. Some came near to reaching her perch.

She had blood on her cut hands and more streamed from the bite on her leg. How long could she continue to balance on the window ledge? And if she fell—

For the second time Kristie shouted "Lew!" knowing at the same time that her call would never be heard.

"Hold on!"

Kristie, unbelieving, looked away from the wave of rats fighting to reach her.

Lew was coming!

He had halted on the road and was taking aim with his stunner. Below her the frantic rats began to drop and lie still. Some turned to run and were caught in the beam of Lew's weapon. They curled up limply on the stone.

When they were all still, he came swiftly forward, though he did not slip his weapon back into the loop on his belt. Kicking the unconscious rats out of his path, he held out his left hand to Kristie.

"Catch hold!" he ordered. "Jump!"

Kristie had gripped the frame of the window so tightly that her fingers were stiff and she had trouble loosening them. Somehow she scrambled down. As Lew caught her she felt very sick and queer. The buildings and even the dome wall seemed to ripple. She cried out and could not stay on her feet.

Kristie remembered very little of how they got back to their own street. Lew must have carried her most of the way while she continued to feel sick and giddy. Then, later, she lay on her bed and Fanna came to bandage her cut hands and the bite on her leg.

She awoke, finally, feeling lightheaded but no longer sick. Her leg was very sore when she moved it and her hands were wound about with strips of white bandage.

When she turned her head on the pillow she saw Lew. He was sprawled out in the big chair, his head forward on his chest and his eyes closed as if he were asleep.

"Lew?" Kristie spoke his name.

At the sound of her voice his eyes opened. He looked at her. His face was tired, as if he had been hurt, too. Kristie pulled herself higher on her pillow. Had the rats come after them? Hurt Lew? She could not see any bandages on him.

“Lew—?”

He frowned at her. Now he sat up straight and leaned a little forward.

“Why, Kristie—why did you run away?” His voice sounded as if he were really mad at her.

Kristie shivered. Lew was not usually like this; he made her feel so alone now.

“Why, Kristie?” he repeated, his voice louder and sharper.

“The gate,” she said, knowing that she must answer, even if she could not make him understand. “I wanted to find the gate—Outside.”

“What about the gate?”

“I wanted to see—to know—what was Outside.”

Lew shook his head as if he could not understand. “But you do know, Kristie. I’ve told you over and over. There’s nothing Outside. The world is dead. I guess I’ve been to blame. I should never have let you use the readers. You believed those tapes. And they aren’t true—now they’re just stories, Kristie, made-up stories.” He thumped his knee with his fist at every word, as if by such hammering he could make her believe him. “All stories, Kristie.”

“Not in the old days,” she held to her small dream. “And nobody really knows even now. Nobody’s been Outside for a long time.”

“Nobody will ever be again,” Lew got up.

“And you— Kristie, you could have been—“ he stopped abruptly. Then he continued, “You must stay in the street here and never go away without me or Fanna or some other Big with you. Not again.”

“All right,” Kristie agreed in a small voice. She knew he was right. She had gone by herself and there had been nothing to discover after all, nothing but a sealed gate and a dead place full of rats. Kristie shivered.

She must do as Lew said. Lew was always right.

## 3

## Reddy

Kristie had bad dreams. Then, too, there was the day Meg came to see her and brought the fur pillow which was Meg’s comfort in times of trouble. Only when Kristie touched it, she could see one of the rats jumping at her. She screamed and Fanna came running.

Kristie felt very ashamed of herself when she tried to explain. She was almost a Big and should not be afraid of any old pillow just because it felt soft and furry. Meg had gotten mad at her. She had marched away holding her pillow close and saying that it was not a rat, and if Kristie called it that she was crazy!

“Maybe I am crazy,” Kristie hiccupped to Fanna. “Of course the pillow is not a rat. But it is furry and black, which makes me think, even see in my mind, the rats slipping in and out of shadows.”

As she choked out her words, Kristie began to shake, her hands clutching tightly at the covers. Fanna gathered her close and held her until she felt warm again inside.

That evening Lew brought her Reddy. Perhaps Fanna had asked him to find something to make the dreams go away. Or maybe he knew what Kristie needed without being told.

The ever-glow lights were turned up when he came in holding a full shoulder tote as if he had been looting. Eagerly Kristie sat up in bed, hoping he had some treat for her.

However, when he shook the tote and the object it held fell on the bed, she shrank back.

Lew did not reach out to comfort her as Fanna had done. He stood still and watched Kristie stare at what he had brought. She began to shiver again and pulled herself up higher on the pillows to get away from that—that thing!

Then Lew moved. He took her hand in his. Though Kristie struggled, she did not have the strength to pull away from him. Then he drew her fingers down to touch the animal that sat there watching her with knowing black eyes.

“This is Reddy,” Lew said with authority in his voice. “You remember Reddy from the story tapes.”

Kristie’s mouth felt dry, making it hard for her to answer. Lew continued to hold her hand firmly down on the head of the stuffed toy. It was hard for her to believe it was not alive, since Reddy looked exactly like those animals she had seen on one of her favorite story tapes.

“Reddy—“ she repeated the name in a very low voice, which quavered a little.

“Reddy, the fox.”

Foxes once lived Outside, just as did all the other animals she so longed to see: the deer, bears, cats, dogs, and rabbits. Why, she could sit right here and name maybe fifty animals she had learned about from the tapes.

But Reddy, this Reddy, must be alive! He was so exactly like the pictures. His fur was soft under her fingers which Lew still held against Reddy’s head. And he did not look like a rat in the least.

“He could kill those old rats!” Kristie said.

Lew nodded. “He sure could, or the real Reddy could. But this Reddy is yours, Kristie. And he will keep those dream rats away.” Lew took away his hand, leaving hers free. Now she had no desire to snatch her fingers from the fur.

Reddy had been made to sit on his haunches, his bush of a tail curling around the side of his body. His head was cocked a little to one side, as if he watched something very interesting

and was figuring out in his mind just what was to be done.

Kristie grabbed him close and with her forefinger traced his upturned ears, his button of a black nose, the sharp angle of his muzzle. He was a lovely burnished reddish brown color except for some darker spots and the white tip on the generous fluff of his tail. And, though Kristie had no way of guessing, he was life-size. She knew that he was indeed big enough to vanquish any rat which tried to face him.

"I wish—I wish he was real!" she said longingly.

Lew smiled but shook his head slowly. "Not anymore, Kristie. But you can pretend he is real."

She gathered Reddy into the crook of her arm, no longer aware of the bad memories any touch of fur brought. Reddy was the nicest thing Lew had ever given her.

"Where did you find him?" she asked. Lew was smart; he was a good looter. But he had never brought back anything as satisfying to the eye, as soft and comforting to the touch, as Reddy.

"In a store, sitting 'way up on a top shelf—" Lew gestured to show how high the shelf must have been. "He gave me a big surprise, he looked so real, just sitting there as if he were watching me."

"He was, you know," Kristie smoothed Reddy's fur. "Maybe he knew you wanted to find someone like him. He made you turn and look up to right where he was—"

Lew laughed. "Kristie, your imagination is just too big." Then the happy lights went out of his eyes as he gazed down at her. Now he was stern and serious. "You remember your promise, Kristie?"

She nodded. "I'm not to go away from the street without a Big. But the gate's no good anyway, Lew. I know that and I wouldn't try to go again. Only—" Deep down inside her the old discontent stirred again. "I wish we could know, really know what it is like Outside. I wish there were a window in the dome somewhere and we could look through it to see for ourselves."

"Kristie!" his tone was very sharp. "You promised!"

"I know. I won't go hunting any window, Lew, truly I won't. Only—don't you wish sometimes that you could see, too? The tapes—"

Lew shook his head. "No. I've seen the last tapes showing what was Outside when the gates were finally closed. You saw those too, Kristie. Everything is dead out there, poisoned. There's nothing left but bad air we cannot breathe and dead ground."

"Yes," Kristie agreed doubtfully. But one part of her still wanted to know. Even Lew admitted those tapes were old. Could Outside have changed any? Well, she supposed there was no way of ever finding out. Now there were only picture tapes to pretend by. And she had Reddy, who was very important indeed.

Lew was called out of the room. Kristie lay back on her pillows, her face turned admiringly towards Reddy. Why had someone made Reddy look so alive? Was it because the maker missed the Outside and wanted to remember animals like foxes? Just as she, Lew, and the others watched the picture tapes?

Were there other Outside things, other animals, to be found in the city if one looked closely enough? Perhaps she could persuade Fanna, or one of the other Bigs, to go hunting with her when her leg was well.

Kristie knew that Fanna had worried about the bite. The Big girl had gone looting for medicine and now the pain was no longer a steady throb. Kristie just noticed it if she moved her leg too quickly without thinking. The glass cuts on her hands were already so well healed that she did not have to wear bandages over them anymore. But she could see the pink scars as she patted and smoothed Reddy.

Suddenly her attention was drawn away from Lew's gift as she overheard raised voices in the next room.

"First three Littles gone. Then that girl Bet who was in charge and with her two more—" The voice was a strange one. Kristie listened more closely. She even crawled to the other end of the bed to hear. Her door was ajar but not far enough to let her see who the stranger was.

"I give it to you straight," his angry voice continued, "that guy's out to get us all. And I don't think he's pill-happy either. At least, from what I've been able to pick up, he doesn't act that way. Also, any hip doesn't care about collecting Littles. They're so sunk in their private whirl-worlds they don't care about anything real anymore. No, I don't know where this Rhyming Man comes from or what his game is, but we've got to stop him. And we did trail him through those back alleys into your territory."

"All right," Lew answered. "I'll turn out a search party and we'll go through the alleys but good. You're welcome to bring in all you want of your Crowd to help."

"Fair enough. When can we start now?"

"As soon as I can round up our guys—"

"No girls," the other cautioned. "Seems like they can be hypoed, or whatever this guy does, just the same as the Littles."

"No girls," Lew agreed. "The trouble is right now we have three looting parties out for supplies. I don't have too many Bigs to call on. But the others can join us when they come back."

"All I want is to nail this Rhyming Man and nail him good." To Kristie the stranger's voice sounded not only angry but a little scared. "Maybe then we can make him tell where he took the Littles and our girls. So try to stun him but don't do anything fancy."

"Right. We'll get to the end of the 450thblock as soon as we can muster."

There was the sound of a door closing. Then Kristie heard Fanna's voice ask:

"What do you think, Lew?"

"I don't know. According to Brad this so-called Rhyming Man comes around singing and he gets Littles to follow him. Then he and they just disappear. Brad's Crowd has lost five Littles and two girls so far. It sounds bad to me. Now Brad thinks this guy is in our territory. You make sure our own Littles stay right in the street. No going beyond."

"Of course."

Kristie heard the door close again. Lew must have left. A Rhyming Man who came around singing? Singing what? And where did he go with the Littles and Bigs who followed him?

Once more Kristie shivered as she crawled back to her pillows and huddled down into the covers with Reddy sitting by her shoulder on alert guard. She stroked him, somehow sure that she was not going to have that bad dream about rats again.

Lew did not return until very late at night, though night and day were the same thing in the city, at least out on the street where the glow-lights did not dim.

In the morning Fanna said that Kristie was well enough to get up and brought her new jeans and a shirt to wear. Her shirt was green, which was Kristie's favorite color. The material felt silky as Kristie fingered it. There was still a bandage on her leg but the jeans covered it. So she looked the same as always in Fanna's big mirror.

Reddy looked even brighter red against the green of Kristie's shirt as she cradled him in her arms. He was so real. If he were only alive like the Reddy in the reading tapes!

As Fanna came in with some soup and bread (it was fruit bread out of a loot can), Kristie said,

"Fanna—could you make Reddy come alive?"

She had dreamed while Reddy was on guard by her pillow, a wonderful, happy dream—not one to make her wake shivering with fear. She had been in a place as green as her new shirt. Reddy had been leaping back and forth ahead of her, urging her on to follow him to some exciting discovery. And she was sure that this was the Outside Lew said was dead.

Fanna tossed her heavy hair back over her shoulders. She set the tray down on the table.

"No." Fanna never talked much, except about the things which mattered most to her—helping any Little or Big who was sick or hurt. She spent almost as much time at the learning center as Lew did. But she did not hunt out tapes about machines. Rather, she was absorbed by those on helping sick people. Once or twice Kristie had seen her angry because the tapes did not teach her enough, or because she could not understand some of the words or how to use all the healing machines. (There were machines to mend broken people just as there were machines to run the city.)

"Reddy is a toy," she said to Kristie now.

"He looks so real." Kristie set the fox carefully on the table. She had the strangest feeling that she should offer him some of her food since his intense stare was aimed at her soup bowl.

"I don't know about that." Fanna shrugged. "But you are no Little to believe he is real, Kristie. You are big enough to understand the truth." Kristie spooned up the soup. Fanna was good when you were sick or afraid, as she had been about the bad rat dream. Only when you were well again, she sometimes made you feel as if you were wasting her time.

"He looks *real*," Kristie muttered under her breath.

She could just see him stand up on his four legs, uncurl his tail, and open his mouth.

He could not talk, of course, like the Crowd. How had foxes talked to each other Outside, she wondered? What kind of noises had they made when they asked their own questions? She had never paid particular attention to animal language when she'd watched the tapes; she had always been more interested in how the Outside creatures lived.

Kristie wished that there had been a window at the gate so she could have seen for sure that there was nothing left Outside.

"The Olds made a lot of things which looked real but weren't," Fanna said. It sounded a little as if she did not like the idea of real-unreal things.

Then she spoke directly to Kristie. "I have to go see Ella now. You can go down to the street if you want to, Kristie. But remember what you promised Lew."

"I know. And I won't—leave the street, I mean." Kristie watched Reddy rather than Fanna, who was putting some small bottles into a bag. Kristie knew Ella was often ill. That was one reason Fanna read the tapes about healing. She hoped to find answers in them to help Ella. Fanna and Ella had been Littles together, and Fanna worried a lot about her.

Kristie finished her soup and ate all the bread, which was a real treat. The Crowd did not find much bread anymore. She washed her bowl and spoon in the sink under a slow trickle of water. The water seemed to run more slowly every time she ran it. Lew worried about the water a lot.

As she set the bowl on a shelf, Kristie wondered what would happen if the water stopped running altogether. What would they drink then, and how could they wash? Lew said some parts of the city were already dead. Maybe the Crowd would have to move to another part of the city if the water failed.

Kristie gathered up Reddy and went down to the street. Bill and Meg were there and some of the real Littles. Kathie had the twins sitting by her and was telling them a story. There were only three real Littles anymore. Lew said they had been born just at the end of the plague time. After they grew up, there would be no more Littles.

The Bigs would grow to be Olds and she and the other Littles would grow to be Bigs. Kristie sat down on the edge of the dead wiggle-walk and for the first time wondered what would happen to them all in the future. Another plague? Or would the whole city just stop?

She felt cold when her mind made those pictures. If parts of Inside were dead now, how long would it take for everything to stop? No water, no food, no breathers. Kristie began to feel just as she had when she had seen the rats moving in on her—as if she wanted to run away screaming, and yet could not move. This was a very bad feeling; it made her sick and giddy.

## 4

## London Bridge Is Falling Down

"Hi!"

Bill was running down the wiggle-walk, bouncing a ball ahead of him. Now he paused by Kristie.

She looked up warily. Bill teased a lot. Sometimes he was really mean. She was not sure she even liked Bill.

"Hi," she answered.

"What you got there?" He leaned over her, eyeing Reddy with interest.

Kristie laced her fingers protectively around Reddy.

"A fox." She made her answer as brief as she could. She wished he would go away.

Bill grinned. "A fox?" He tossed his ball from one dirty hand to the other.

"Where'd you get it?"

"Lew brought it."

"Let's see it—" He stuffed his ball in his pocket, reached out—

Kristie dodged. "No, Reddy's mine." Suddenly she was afraid again.

Bill was wearing his going-to-be-mean look.

"I just want to see it." He advanced on her. "I won't hurt your old fox. Give us a look now"

"No!" Kristie tried to stand up. But she was still shaky from being sick and her leg hurt as she jerked away, trying to evade Bill's grabbing hands.

Then she caught her toe on the edge of the wiggle-walk and sprawled forward. Reddy fell out of her grasp. She could not squirm around in time to prevent Bill's scooping up the fox.

To Kristie's horror, Bill tossed Reddy up in the air and yelled: "Flying fox! See the flying fox!"

Kristie scrambled up and rushed at him. But he had already caught Reddy once more and

was swinging the fox behind his back. Now he twisted and turned as he danced backward just beyond Kristie's reach.

"Give it to me!" She was so mad she was nearly crying. "Bill, you give me Reddy!"

"Yeah, come and get him!" Bill yelled back. "If you want this old fox, you've got to get him."

He turned. Holding Reddy tightly against his chest, he began to run down the wiggle-walk. Kristie limped after him. She doubted she could catch up with Bill. And even if she did, he was bigger and stronger than she. But she must try as hard as she could to get Reddy back.

Bill reached the end of the block. He looked back at her, still grinning in that hateful way. Once more he tossed Reddy up in the air and called:

"Flying fox!"

Tears now slipped down Kristie's cheeks. She rubbed angrily at her eyes. Bill liked to see her cry. Listen to him now!

Bill was jumping up and down, his hand around Reddy's neck, swinging the fox back and forth as if the animal were a ball bat.

"Yah, Yah! Kristie's a cry-baby! Lookit the cry-baby!"

With a last "cry-baby," he rounded the house at the block's end. Forgetting her promise to Lew and Fanna, Kristie limped after Bill as fast as she could. As she passed the corner, she saw Bill waiting for her halfway down the street, once more tossing Reddy up in the air.

This time he caught Reddy by the tail and swung the fox around and around. Kristie cried out.

She knew Reddy was not really alive but somehow he seemed so to her. To see Bill swinging him by his bushy tail was as horrible as if Reddy could feel the pain.

"No, don't!" she screamed.

Bill only laughed.

"Cry-baby!" he jeered. "You think you're so smarty-smart 'cause your brother's the Big Man for the Crowd. Well, I've got no big brother, but I'm a lot smarter 'n faster 'n everything than any old girl. Isn't that so, Kristie? Isn't it? Say it—say it! That I'm smarter than you! If you don't, you won't see this old stuffed thing again!"

He swung Reddy around harder and harder. Then, to Kristie's terror and despair, Reddy's body arched far up into the air, though his bush of a tail still remained in Bill's tight hold. Up and out flew Reddy, back into the open mouth of one of the small passages between two buildings, where there were dark places in spite of the overhead lights.

"Stupid old thing." After a moment of silence Bill dropped the tail and gave the piece of fur

a kick. “Just a silly thing for a Little to play with.” But he was no longer grinning. Instead he looked uneasy, eyeing Kristie sideways.

“Stupid thing!” he repeated loudly, and started down the street towards her. But he kept to the other side, still watching the girl as if he expected her to call one of the Bigs to deal with him.

Bill—Bill had *killed* Reddy! Kristie paid no attention to the boy as he edged past, well away from her. She felt queer inside, as if something so terrible had happened that she could not think about it. She did not even see Bill leave. Her eyes were fixed on the tail lying on the wiggle-walk.

Kristie limped on until she could pick it up. Now she was shocked past crying. She just felt all cold inside. The furry tail was in her hands. But Reddy—Reddy was gone!

For a long minute Kristie stood there, trying not to believe that this awful thing had happened. Only she could not shut out the truth. Reddy—!

Kristie turned to face the narrow, shadow-filled passageway into which the fox had disappeared. Maybe she could find him. She had to find him!

Holding the tail tightly in her sweating hand, Kristie plunged into the dark way. She stumbled over a clutter of broken-open boxes. Looters must have used this way for a dump. How could she ever find Reddy in this mass of debris?

Kristie forced herself to go slowly and look carefully. Her leg ached as she climbed over and around boxes and ripped-open cartons, pushing and pulling at some so she could see better into the cracks between them.

How could Reddy have flown so far? Kristie was more than halfway down the alley now. Somehow she must have missed him.

“Reddy?” She called in a thin voice as if he could really hear her and answer. Now she was crying again, wearily, as she looked around. There were so many places where he might be and she could not see him.

Her only hope was to search clear to the end of the way and then come back again.

She kicked at paper which lay in dirty wads and rounded a couple of crates with mashed-in ends. She had to stop and rest her leg. It hurt so much now. She leaned against a pile of boxes, with tears so heavy in her eyes that she could no longer see very well.

It was when she started to search again that she caught a glimpse of ruddy fur.

With a cry of relief Kristie pulled at a carton. Reddy!

He had landed on his back and was looking up at her with his shining black eyes.

Kristie hugged him close.

"Reddy!"

Perhaps Fanna could put on his tail. Reddy might not be alive like Kristie or Ella, but he was a person to Kristie and he needed Fanna to help him.

She turned him around to inspect where the tail had come loose. There was a hole, and on the tail was a point which must fit into the hole. Kristie gently pushed Reddy's tail into its rightful place. It was still loose. She would have to be very careful until Fanna could fasten it, maybe with some glue. But Reddy was whole again. And as Kristie examined him, she could discover no further harm.

"Reddy!" She hugged him tightly. Now that she had time to think she was really mad at Bill. She did not usually tattletale to a Big, but Kristie decided that she must let Lew know about Bill.

She held Reddy tenderly against her as she rose from the crate where she had been sitting. She felt so relieved and happy that she began to sing one of the songs from the tapes. It was the same one Lew had whistled on the day she had hunted for the Gate:

*"London Bridge is falling down,*
*Falling down, falling down."*

Suddenly Kristie was startled into silence. Someone else was singing, and it was not a Little. The voice was strong and deep:

*"Who will build it up again,*
*Up again, up again?"*

The other voice sang loud and clear.

Kristie wet her lips with her tongue tip.

"Lew?" she called uncertainly. But Lew seldom sang; he preferred to whistle. Could it be one of the other Bigs? No, she had never heard any of them sing that kind of a song.

*"We shall build it up again,*
*Up again, up again!*
*We shall build it up again,*
*My fair lady!"*

Then she heard more voices—Littles' voices!

With Reddy pressed tightly to her for safety, Kristie headed on down the way towards the voices instead of back towards the block where the Crowd lived.

"*Wood and clay will wash away,*
*Wash away, wash away—"*

It was the deep voice again. The Littles echoed in their shriller tones:

*"Wood and clay will wash away,*
*My fair lady!"*

The singing was now quite close. Kristie halted at the end of the alley and looked out onto a more brightly lighted and wider wiggle-walk. She gasped at what she saw.

There was a Big—no, he was an Old! But there were no Olds left; everyone knew that. Then how could she be seeing one?

He was not walking or running but jigging along, two steps forward and one back, hopping from foot to foot. His tall body was never still. Sometimes he faced ahead. Sometimes he turned around in a jump to look back the way he had come, at those who followed him.

He had followers—four Littles! Two were perhaps as old as Kristie herself, the other two younger. And as they sang, they were hopping and jiggling along, too, just like the Old.

As he jumped, spun, and danced, his body glittered all over. He was not wearing the same kind of clothes as the Crowd. His clothes fitted tightly to his body and were patched with different colors. The patches shone as if sewn with sparkles. Little flickers of light ran from one patch to the next with every movement of the Old's body.

As he waved his arms and flipped his hands back and forth, the sparks of color seemed to spring out into the air around him. His head bobbed and nodded. It was covered with hair as white as the cotton thread Fanna used to sew with. One lock flopped down until it almost hid his twinkling eyes. And his brown skin was darker than any Kristie had ever seen before.

"'*Iron and steel will rust away,*'" he continued the song, waving one arm urgently as if telling them to sing louder.

" '*Rust away, rust away*!'" the Littles shouted in return.

Then he glanced around and his eyes met Kristie's.

He—she did not know what happened at the moment when he looked at her so directly. There was something very important which she must do, which they all must do.

Lew—Fanna—for a short second she remembered her promise. Then the memory was swept away.

The sparkling Old was beckoning to her. He was not singing now, but smiling gently. Why, there was nothing at all to be afraid of. This was right: to follow the Rhyming Man was what she wanted to do most in all the world.

She moved out of the shadowed alley. The Rhyming Man was never still, even as he paused to wave her on to join the Littles. Instead he hopped and skipped, smiled and nodded.

*"In and out do we go,*
*Bow and scrape,*
*And point the toe!"*

He sang, pointing to her and the rest of the Littles and making them a deep bow. He ended by following his own orders and pointing outward with his toe on the walk.

*"Take hands, all,*
*And let us go!*
*Time is short,*
*That we know."*

Kristie shifted Reddy into the crook of her right arm and found her left hand caught by the nearest Little. Now they were all linked together.

The Rhyming Man nodded so vigorously as he viewed them that sparkles of color appeared to fly outwards from every part of him.

"'*London Bridge is falling down,*'" he began once more. Kristie began to dance in time to the tune, her hurting leg quite forgotten as she joined in singing:

*"'Falling down, falling down—'"*

Now she neither knew nor cared where they might be going—just following the Rhyming Man was enough.

5

In and Out, Roundabout

*"Trip and go, heave and ho!*
*Up and down, to and fro;*
*From the town to the grove,*
*Two by two let us rove,*
*A-maying, a-playing;*
*Love hath no gainsaying!*
*So—merrily, merrily, trip and go!"*

The Rhyming Man jigged along. And though Kristie had never heard the song before, she was singing the words as if she had known them all her life. The girl she held hands with was singing, too, as were all the Littles. The sound of their voices filled the street and echoed back from the empty buildings.

Kristie was only dimly aware that this was a part of the city she had never seen before. Many of the lights were out so that shadows crept out toward them over the edge of the wiggle-walk on which they danced. However, the glimmer of the Rhyming Man's clothing grew brighter and brighter. He was like a moving light leading them on.

" "*Here we go round the jingo-ring*,'" he sang as he pranced to the left into a wide doorway of one of the buildings.

*"The jingo-ring, the jingo-ring.*
*Here we go round the jingo-ring,*
*With a merry-ma, merry-tna-tanzie!"*

The inside of the building was light again. This radiance spread, not from the walls or the ceiling far over their heads, but from under their feet. When they danced after their singing leader into a great room, Kristie saw that the floor was made up of big blocks of different colors. As the Rhyming Man jigged and hopped from one to the next, the blocks blazed under his feet.

Somehow Kristie and the rest knew, without his ever telling them, that they must follow him carefully, stepping in turn just where he had gone. Now he dropped back to catch hands with the two smallest Littles, turning a wide smile from one to the other.

*"See-saw, sacaradown,*
*Now which is the way to London Town?*
*Put one foot up, the other down*
*This is the way to London Town!"*

There was a red square beneath Kristie, then a yellow. Now a green, then a blue. The Rhyming Man hopped two squares to the left and landed on another red one, carrying both Littles with him as easily as if they had springs on their feet. Yellow again, then another hop to the right, not this time to blue but to a block which glowed green, then over farther to a red.

Kristie did not try to think about what they were doing. She simply followed the feeling that this was right. Her feet obeyed the movements of the Rhyming Man with no commands from her to do this or that.

*"Intery, mintery, cutery corn;*
*Appleseed and apple thorn;*
*Wine, brier, lumber-lock,*
*Five fat geese in one flock.*
*Sit you now and let us sing,*
*Out about and in again!"*

He had dropped the Littles' hands and they squatted down on the floor, each in the middle of a red block. Kristie was planted on a yellow. The others, flanking her, were on green.

For the first time the Rhyming Man stood still. Now the smile left his face as he turned to look at them one after another, staring straight into the eyes of each of his small followers. When his gaze met Kristie's, she was not afraid but rather excited, the way a person gets when something good is about to happen.

He began to sing again, but this time none of the children recognized the words or believed they must sing, too.

*"For every evil under the sun,*
*There is a remedy, or there is none.*
*If there be one, seek till you find it,*
*If there be none, never mind it."*

Kristie did not know just what he meant. However, she sensed that this was important. They

must do something now—she waited for the Rhyming Man to tell them what it was.

*"Seeing's believing—no, no, no!*
*Believing's seeing, you can go!"*

Kristie was puzzled. She was sure that what he said was very important indeed. Yet she could not understand.

Again he was quiet and looked at each of them for a long, searching moment. Then once more he smiled. Kristie let go of her breath in a sigh of relief. It was all right; her not understanding did not really matter in the least. She should just follow the Rhyming Man and all would be well.

He snapped his fingers. The Littles understood his signal and scrambled once more to their feet. He skipped from one red block to the next, always facing them.

*"Now we dance, looby, looby, looby,*'" his voice seemed to fill the whole of the room, big as it was.

*"Now we dance, looby, looby, looby, light.*
*Look to your left hand,*
*Now to your right!"*

Like the others, Kristie obeyed, moving first to the nearest block to the left and then right to the one she had stood on before. Twice the Rhyming Man sang directions, and twice they did just as he told them.

Then he was still, raising his hand with a long finger ready to point.

*"Eeery, Orrey, Ickery, Ann,*
*Fillison, Follison, Nicholas John,*
*Queevy, Quavey, English Navy,*
*Out goes you—and you—and you—"*

His finger moved very quickly, pointing at first to the two Littles right before him, then at those on a line with Kristie. She did not even have time to gasp as she saw one child after another disappear. Then—

Kristie had no words to describe what happened when that long finger centered on her. There was no light, just a big, thick black in which she was lost. She tried to scream, and then—

She was rolling across something as green as the blocks of the pavement, but much softer. It did not shine either.

As Kristie came to a halt, she lay on her back looking up. There was no grey dome over her. Kristie gulped. Was that—sky? Could she be—*Outside?*

She shut her eyes. No! This was so—so open! If this was really Outside, she did not want to be here after all. Lew! She wanted Lew! She wanted Fanna. She wanted most of all to open her eyes and again see the buildings, the wiggle-walk, all that was right and real. Not

this—this emptiness!

Clutching Reddy tightly to her, Kristie tried to believe that this was all a bad dream, like her dreams about the rats. It must be a dream—it must be!

*"For every evil under the sun,*
*There is a remedy, or there is none*
*If there be one, seek till you find it.*
*If there be none, never mind it."*

The Rhyming Man's voice. Now the words sounded fainter, as if he were farther away. No hollow echo followed as it had in the big hall.

Kristie knew she could not sit here forever holding her eyes shut. So she made herself think about the words of the song, even though she did not understand them.

Summoning up all her courage, Kristie opened her eyes. There was the Rhyming Man, looking straight at her again. Only she did not feel as confident as she had when he had gazed at her that way before. Outside, his bright clothing did not glitter and his face looked as if he were very tired— somehow a little like Lew looked when he was worried about the breathers stopping or the machines going wrong.

Behind him, all around him, the world was green! Not the bright green of the squares over which they had danced, but a green Kristie had never seen before.

She swallowed again. It was true. This was Outside—as it had been on the reading tapes. That was a tree right behind the Rhyming Man, this was grass under her—

All this openness—no walls, no dome. Kristie crouched lower, hugging the ground, wanting the walls, the dome. They were safe—this was—

She heard a babble of voices and turned her head very cautiously. They were all there, all the others who had followed the Rhyming Man. But now they were strangers. Kristie hugged Reddy tighter. She was fighting tears and she wanted to scream as loudly as she had when the rats caught her.

The Rhyming Man still looked down into her eyes. Kristie tried to avoid his gaze. No! She would not—

He was pointing once more. Not at her this time but up into the open sky.

*"Star light, star bright,*
*First star I've seen tonight.*
*I wish I may, I wish I might,*
*Have the wish I wish tonight."*

Against her will, but because she somehow had to look where his finger pointed, Kristie once more raised her head to blink at the sky. It was darker now. There was a twinkle of light far, far above.

A star! A real star!

Her wonder fought her fear. She knew what a star was though no one in the city had ever seen one, not even the long-gone Olds. It had been years, and years, and years—so many even Lew could not hope to count them—since the dome had gone up to close out the sky and the rest of the world. But here was a star!

Somehow, staring at that distant wink of light, which was not as bright as the glitter of the Rhyming Man's clothing yet sharp in another way, Kristie became less and less afraid.

Reddy's head was soft and furry under her chin as she wavered up to her knees and then got to her feet.

"This is Outside." She said the words almost as if she were asking the Rhyming Man a question.

*"Outside, inside,*
*Front to back.*
*Starlight, Sunlight—*
*There is no lack."*

Slowly Kristie allowed her eyes to slip away from the star and move across that very frightening sweep of sky which was not a big, safe cover like the dome but only a big, big emptiness.

No! There was another star! And this one she had found for herself. Maybe it was hers to wish on. Or did only that first star count?

"You said—wish." She looked now to the Rhyming Man.

He smiled again and nodded eagerly. But he stood quietly. Out here on the green grass, he no longer danced.

"I wish Lew were here!" Kristie had been encouraged by the Rhyming Man's smile.

"He said—he said there was no Outside anymore. I want Lew!"

She did want him fiercely. Not just to prove that the Outside was alive and (as she was beginning to guess) a very wonderful place. No, she wanted Lew because he was the closest person she had ever known. He was her own Big.

The Rhyming Man no longer smiled. His eyes, Kristie thought with a small fear beginning to grow in her, were sad.

"Lew can come? He will come!" Her question turned to a demand.

Slowly the Rhyming Man shook his head.

*"Little—Big—*
*Little go, Big no.*

*Always must it*
*Answer so."*

"Why?" demanded Kristie. Her fear was heating into anger. "Why can't a Big come here?"

"Some of us do—"

Kristie turned quickly at the sound of another voice. She had half-forgotten those who had come Outside with her. Now she saw there were others with them, soothing the very small Littles who were sniffling and holding hands with the others. And right next to her stood a Big girl like Fanna.

The stranger smiled and held out her hand. "Some do, you see," she repeated. "I did."

"Who are you?" Kristie demanded bluntly.

"Lisa. And that," she pointed to another Big who had picked up one of the Littles, "is Truda. Beyond there is Sally. We are from London Town. Come—"

Kristie eyed her warily. She glanced back to where the Rhyming Man had been.

There was no longer anyone there.

"Where—" her surprise now sent her toward Lisa. "Where did he go?"

"Back Inside," Lisa answered.

Her fingers curled about Kristie's in warm welcome.

"Come on, let's go to London Town."

"But Lew said that's far off across the sea. How do we get there from here?" asked Kristie.

She did not pull back, however, as the Big girl drew her around some bushes and down a slope. The light in the sky was a lot dimmer, making it harder for them to see where they were going. There seemed to be no glow-lights Outside.

"Not this London. Not where we are to build the bridge," Lisa answered.

"Lew!" Kristie halted and tried to jerk away from the gentle hold. But Lisa tightened her grip.

"If he can come—in time he will," Lisa told her.

"I wish I knew what you meant," Kristie said sadly.

"But you shall, you shall," Lisa promised as they went on. The tall-standing live grass brushed softly against their legs and the stars came winking into life over their heads.

## 6

## Believing Is Seeing

If she had been alone, Kristie might have grown uneasy and even frightened as the night darkened. She could hear queer noises. The loudest was made by the brook as it gurgled along just a little way off. She lay beside Lisa on the heap of grass which was her bed.

There were other sounds, too. Some buzzed and some called. Each time Kristie would stiffen to listen. Lisa seemed to sense her vague fears, though Kristie said nothing. Then the older girl would explain that such and such a noise was a harmless flying thing or a small animal they did not have to fear.

Kristie kept peering into the dark which she had never seen before. Though the stars hung overhead, they were too far away to give much light. However, something else was beginning to shine—a great orange-yellow ball was rising in the sky.

The moon! It must be the moon!

Once people like her, and Lew, and the Crowd had flown up to the moon. Kristie remembered a tape Lew had run in which Olds, wearing queer thick clothing, walked with slow strides across the broken surface of the moon. The tape voice had spoken of a later moon station where people lived for a while.

But men had not stayed there long. Shortly after, the world had become so bad all the Olds went into their cities and sealed them up tight. Only—if the world had been so bad, how could Outside now be green and good again? Kristie drew a deep breath. The air Outside was different and full of strange smells, but not the bad ones you sometimes sniffed Inside.

What had happened to the Outside?

Why had the Olds said it was poisoned, bare, brown and dead?

"When the Olds left it," Lisa's voice came as a soft whisper through the dark, "the world began to clean itself—"

Kristie's head jerked around so that she was no longer looking at the big ball of the moon but facing Lisa through the dark. The girl's face was only a thin sliver of white which Kristie could not truly see.

"You—I did not ask about that—not out loud." Kristie shivered. She was sure she had not said a word. She had only thought. Yet Lisa answered what she was thinking about! How could that happen?

"*'Believing's seeing'*—" Lisa whispered.

"Do you understand what that means, Kristie?"

"I—I guess not." She told the truth. The Rhyming Man had said the same thing when she asked about Lew—but she could not understand.

Lew—where was he now? What was he doing? Hunting for her? She wanted Lew!

"If he can come, he will." Again Lisa read Kristie's thoughts.

Holding Reddy tightly, as if he were the only real thing she had left, Kristie sat up on the grass bed. Again the feeling of being lost in a big open place where there were no safe walls closed in on her.

Lisa moved too. But when she tried to put her arm around Kristie, the younger girl shrank away.

"I want to go home—" she muttered. "Tell the Rhyming Man—I want to go back!"

"Listen, Kristie, there is no going back," Lisa told her.

Panic flooded through Kristie. Then, before she could move away, Lisa held her in a tight hold. And—Kristie uttered a small cry, but she did not battle the arms around her.

She, Lisa, was talking to Kristie without words—in a queer way in her mind. There was nothing to be afraid of, Lisa was telling her. Kristie gulped. What was happening to her? Please, she cried out silently, oh, please tell me what is happening?

"We are not sure ourselves yet," Lisa whispered. She was no longer inside Kristie's head, but spoke as people always did. Somehow Kristie was no longer so scared.

"This has something to do with the way we came here," Lisa continued. "The real Littles accept it without trouble. It's only when you are older that you wonder. We do not know why this happens to us. Neither does the Rhyming Man, or else he won't explain. But when we come out of the city we begin to learn that we can understand what others are thinking—if we wish to.

"*Believing's seeing*—" Lisa whispered, "Rhyming Man says. It means, Kristie, that we must not think that anything is true only because we see it in one way. We must be able to guess that things can happen which are very strange and different from everything we have known before.

"Those who follow the Rhyming Man seem able to do this. He cannot bring anyone out from the city who does not have this sort of mind. Some Bigs will never believe in what they cannot see. Those Bigs may never leave Inside. Most Littles are not yet so sure of what they are supposed to believe to say this or that may not be so. Do you understand?"

Kristie had listened closely. Yes, she could see a meaning in the words of the Rhyming Man now. It was like some of the Bigs who did not care to use the reading tapes. They argued that the reading tapes were all just made-up stories. Then there were others, such as Lew and Fanna, who hunted for knowledge. Since Kristie had so wanted to know what was Outside, her dreams could all come true.

"Like the reading tapes," she said, "are not all made-up things after all. Some of them are real if you hunt for the right ones."

"Yes. Most of us who came Outside have listened to the tapes and imagined what other ways of life would be like. So the Rhyming Man was able to make us listen and follow him. That is why we are here."

"Why does the Rhyming Man want to bring us Outside?" "Because it is time to build again. Remember London Bridge?" Lisa repeated some of the old song:

"*Build it up with stone, my dears,*
*Then it shall last a thousand years!"*

"But you aren't really building a bridge, are you?" Kristie asked.

"Not one you can see, no," Lisa admitted. "But in a way we are the stones ourselves. And we are careful about what we build now. We want it to last at least a thousand years."

"You mean a new way of living with—Outside?"

"Yes. But we must not make the same mistakes the Olds did. We dare not poison the world a second time."

"So how do we learn not to make those mistakes?" Kristie asked.

"By thinking together—one mind to the next—in this new way. At least that is what we believe now."

The light from the big yellow moon touched Lisa's face to show her smiling.

"Lew?" Kristie could not return that smile. "And Fanna? I want them to help build London Bridge. How can I make them come?"

Lisa's smile faded. "I don't know, Kristie. If they cannot accept '*Believing's seeing'*—then they never will."

"They must!" Kristie cried fiercely. "They must!"

She allowed Lisa to settle her back on the grass bed, Reddy tight in her arms. Lew had brought the fox to her. Maybe he was not alive, but she loved him.

Kristie closed her eyes to shut out the moonlight. She would make Lisa believe she had gone to sleep. Just as she had once planned to find the gate to Outside, so now she wanted to seek a way back Inside. Not to stay, but to let Lew and Fanna and all the rest know about London Bridge.

Lisa said no one could go back Inside. But Kristie would test that for herself. Lew! As she once had shouted his name in terror when the rats came out of the dead place to hunt her, now she tried to call him in her thoughts. Could thoughts reach Inside even if people could not go back?

Though she tried to make a picture of Lew in her mind as she had once pictured the map, it was very hard. She was tired and the picture kept getting blurry. She was—Kristie was

asleep.

Inside the city Lew crouched on a balcony staring down into the great hall below. The blocks of the pavement were no longer as bright as they had been when Kristie and the others had hopped and marched back and forth with the Rhyming Man.

Kristie! Lew's hand tightened about the grip of his stunner. He had returned from the search only to discover that Kristie had gone. Then the distant sound of singing echoing through the streets had guided him here. But at the door to the hall, which had looked wide open, he had run hard into an invisible wall of force that had kept him from plunging on to snatch Kristie away from the others. The Littles had all been watching the dancing, glittering Old as if he were the only real thing in the whole wide world.

It had taken Lew far too long to find this upper way from which he could look down into the hall. But as he had crept to the edge of the balcony he had seen Kristie disappear. She disappeared right before his eyes as if she had never been there at all!

They were all gone now and the blocks were dull. Gone? Where and how?

Lew tried to think clearly. There were many strange machines in the city. A lot of them did not work anymore. The Bigs who were interested did not even know what some of these machines had done.

Lew could only guess that the whole floor was one such machine. Only—what was its purpose? And where was Kristie?

Those nonsense songs and dancing from square to square—what had they to do with any machine? Lew leaned back against the wall. There were scraps of things he remembered from the readers. Now he tried to sort them out in his mind, to think calmly and coolly. What he really wanted to do was run down and beat on the squares to see if they could be trapdoors. Was Kristie now stuck in some underground passage?

That Rhyming Man—who—what—? Lew shook his head. He must forget his raging wish to use his stunner on that Old! Kristie was the only important one. He must find her.

Machines. He had read about some in the city which would run if one spoke to them in just the right tone of voice or used the proper combination of words. Had the Rhyming Man worked some such machine here with his silly songs?

And the way the Littles under his command had changed squares. Did those changes from one color to another also start a machine working? What kind of a machine? Where had it taken Kristie and the rest?

At the end of the balcony was another stairway into the hall. Lew ran towards it, half expecting once more to meet the solid but invisible wall of force. But there was nothing to prevent his going into the hall.

He walked across the blocks, heading for those where he had last seen the Littles. Under his steps the colors also glowed bright and strong. He stooped and ran his hands over the surface of a red one. Light to be seen, but no heat to be felt.

Right about here was the place. Lew halted. Now—he must remember both the pattern in which the Littles had moved across the floor and the songs which matched their dancing. Could he do it? The boy closed his eyes and tried to re-create the scene, not as something real with Kristie a part of it, but rather as a picture on a reader screen.

When he looked about him again—

Lew swung the stunner up, ready to fire—the Rhyming Man was back. The Old pranced around, not singing this time but watching Lew with a measuring stare.

"Where's Kristie?" Lew demanded loudly, leveling the stunner. His voice echoed back at him—"Kristie?"—in a question which the Rhyming Man did not open his mouth to answer. Instead the jiggling figure chanted:

*"Little—Big—*
*Little go, Big no,*
*Always must it*
*Answer so."*

"Talk sense," Lew ordered. In spite of the way this crazy Old jumped around, Lew was sure he could beam him. But first he must make him tell how to find Kristie.

*"Little go, Big no!*"" the Rhyming Man repeated. Now he shook his head from side to side in an exaggerated sweep, as if the gesture would impress Lew with the fact nothing could be done.

Lew reined in his temper. He could beam this Old and knock him out. Only it would be a waste of time. There was another way. He was as tall as the Old. And there was not another boy in the Crowd who could pin Lew down. This Old was really old. Lew saw how thin he was and looked at his white hair. Lew could take him easily.

With a forward rush Lew jumped at the Old.

He struck, not against the other's slight body, but against the floor with a force which made him grunt. His rush towards the Old had made him bump into the same kind of force wall as the one that had prevented his saving Kristie. The stunner flew from his hand, skidded across the smooth block, and landed at the Old one's feet.

Lew tensed, waiting for a return attack. All the Old had to do was reach down and pick up the stunner. Then he could give Lew a blast which would keep him quiet while the Old went off to collect more Littles.

However, the Rhyming Man made no effort to pick up the weapon. He did not even look at it. Instead he stared at Lew.

At first, Lew thought the Old seemed to be hunting for something in the boy's expression. Then the Rhyming Man gave a small shrug. His face changed and looked tired and old, as if he had just faced some disappointment.

Lew licked his lips. He had to know about Kristie. He had to!

“Kristie—where’s Kristie?” he repeated the question he had asked earlier, but this time in despair. The Old would never tell him and this was what he feared most.

*“For every evil under the sun,*’” the Old was mouthing one of those fool rhymes again but Lew, always hoping, listened closely.

*“There is a remedy, or there is none.*
*If there be one, seek till you find it.*
*If there be none, never mind it.”*

‘*Seek till you find it’?* That was what he was trying to do. And never, never would Lew admit there was none and not mind it!

Suddenly the Rhyming Man’s expression changed again. He gave a quick, sharp nod as if Lew had said something to which he agreed. And he gave one of his quick sidewise jumps as he proclaimed loudly:

*“Seeing’s believing—no, no, no!*
*Believing’s seeing, you can go!”*

He twirled around and was gone, right before Lew’s wide open eyes!

7

It Will Last a Thousand Years

*“Seeing’s believing—no, no, no!*
*Believing’s seeing, you can go!”*

Lew repeated the words, trying to make some sense of them. He could guess that they had importance. Now, as he sat on the floor where his attack on the Old had thrown him, he looked around in search of something —anything—which could be a clue.

“*’ Seeing”’s believing’*—“ he said slowly for the second time. He believed in what he saw. He saw this hall and blocks which flared into color when he stepped on them. This was real, solid. He could pound his fist down on the block before him and feel its unyielding surface against his hand.

*“ ‘No, no, no’*—“ Why “no”? Did the Rhyming Man mean not to believe in what I saw?

Lew was suddenly certain that this was the truth. Then, if he were not to believe in what he saw, he was to believe in what he did not see! Of course, this would be believing as seeing!

Was this what had happened to Kristie and the rest? They had believed in the Rhyming Man and in what might not be real. So they went. Went—where? Somewhere else in the city, surely. But *where!*

What must you believe *in!*

Lew looked to where the stunner lay just as it had fallen at the Rhyming Man's feet. Machines—the stunner was a tool, a machine. The whole city was a machine to keep life going on in a burnt-out world. This hall was a machine and machines followed set patterns, planning—if he could discover the secret of the pattern, then he could make it work for him and reach Kristie.

The pattern must have something to do with the way the Littles had moved under the direction of the Rhyming Man. Perhaps the songs with their strings of nonsense words were also a part of it. Maybe the sounds of the words helped to activate the machine. If Lew could only remember!

"*Believing's seeing"*—he must believe that this would work. This was the most important thing of all.

He got to his feet but did not move to pick up the stunner. Instead he turned slowly and completely around so that he could see all the blocks of the pavement. Then he drew a deep breath—

Here goes!

Red square, yellow, blue—

No! Lew halted on a blue which had not blazed to light when he stepped on it. Something was wrong. Nor could he remember the first song at all. Its words had been muffled by the walls as he was trying to find a way in. If only the Rhyming Man—

Lew swung back again to eye the portion of the floor where the Old had danced.

Just the stunner lay there to mark the spot.

"Hi—" Lew's voice rang hollowly. "Hi, there!" He did not even know what name to call the Old. "Rhyming Man!" he shouted at last. Only the echo answered him.

Lew stood straight, head high, his fists on his hips, facing the emptiness as if it were an enemy. He was not licked, not with Kristie missing! Then, as if something deep inside him moved, he called aloud again, not for the strange Old, but for his sister:

"Kristie!"

Outside, the moon was now high and bright. Kristie shifted on the pile of grass.

She opened her eyes. A dream—a dream about Lew. Lew!

Softly she crawled away from the nest beside Lisa. Lew wanted her. She knew this as well as if she could hear him call. On her hands and knees she crept from the place where the others slept.

Once up the slope she got to her feet and began to scramble higher as fast as she could. If she could just discover the place where she had come Outside, then she could find Lew. She must

find Lew!

At the top of the rise Kristie looked carefully around. There, she was sure she remembered that tree. She had seen it behind the Rhyming Man when she asked him about Lew. Only there was no gate Outside—just open country. She turned to glance back. Far in the opposite direction was a big, black blot which swallowed the land. Even where the moon shone down on it the light was less clear. The city!

Kristie studied the blot. So that was what the city looked like—dirty and dark. She shivered. And Lew was caught in there, with Fanna and all the others. No! Lew must come out!

Lew! She did not scream his name aloud as she had when the rats had cornered her by the sealed gate. Instead she made a picture of Lew in her mind and called to it with her thoughts in a way she had never tried before.

She *saw* Lew.

He was standing in the hall where the colored blocks made the floor. Lew had found the Rhyming Man's place and was going to come Outside!

Happiness flooded through Kristie. Then she realized that Lew was not moving. There was no Rhyming Man to show him the way. He was caught in the city. No, Lew would not be caught! He could not be!

If the Rhyming Man was not there to show him the way, could Kristie do it instead?

She tried to think herself back into the hall. But there was no chance. She still stood under the bright moon facing the dark, dead blot of a city. Both Lisa and the Rhyming Man had said no one could go back. But she must do something so Lew could come out! He did not belong in that bad place; he belonged Outside.

How had the Rhyming Man brought them out? Could Kristie somehow think right into Lew's mind as Lisa thought into hers? Could she let him know what to do? She would have to try.

Kristie closed her eyes so she could no longer see the dark trap of the city. She made herself imagine Lew in the hall. Yes! There he was.

Now—

Into her mind came the words of the Rhyming Man's song:

*"See-saw, sacaradown,*
*Now which is the way to London Town?*
*Put one foot up, the other down.*
*This is the way to London Town."*

Lew must—he must hear! Three times Kristie repeated the rhyme.

Lew was moving! A red square, then a yellow, a green, a blue, two squares to be covered by

a hop to another red one. Yellow again, then a hop to a green block, over farther to a red.

* * *

Lew sang the words which seemed to come from nowhere into his mind. He was not sure they were the right ones. Nor could he explain how he thought of them. Somehow they seemed to be what he must say.

The first nonsense rhyme came to an end. But other words followed in the same strange way:

*"Intery, mintery, cutery corn;*
*Appleseed and apple thorn;*
*Wine, brier, lumber-lock.*
*Five fat geese in one flock.*
*Sit you now and let us sing,*
*Out about and in again!"*

Lew dropped down on a yellow block, not knowing what came next. So far nothing had happened, except for the fact the blocks burned brightly as he trod on them.

Out on the hillside Kristie stood statue still. Reddy had fallen unnoticed from her grasp. She cupped both hands tightly over her eyes and tried to remember what the Rhyming Man had done next. She said aloud:

*"Seeing's believing—no, no, no!*
*Believing's seeing, you can go!"*

It was hard for her to see Lew. Now only his face was steady in her mind.

"*Lew!"* She called his name both out loud and in her mind. "Lew! Do as I think!

Please, Lew, do as I think.

*"Now we dance, looby, looby, looby—"*

Kristie could not see if Lew was moving in the right way. There was still just his face in her mind. Did his lips move? Was he also singing the rhyme? Kristie could not be sure.

*"Now we dance, looby, looby, looby, light."*

More nonsense words came into Lew's mind and he chanted them aloud.

*"Look to your left hand,*
*Now to your right!"*

Move to the left block, then back to the right. He did this twice though he had no idea what was making him. He only knew that he must. What came next?

Kristie remained still, her eyes covered. The Rhyming Man had pointed next and then they had gone. But the Rhyming Man was not there with Lew. There was no one to point. The

rest—how should she do the rest when she was here and not there? A Rhyming Man to point—

She did not try to keep Lew steady in her mind now. The Rhyming Man must be there to bring Lew out—he must! She must make the Rhyming Man with a mind picture, she told herself, or Lew will stay locked Inside forever.

* * *

There was a strange flickering in the air. Lew stood watching it numbly. There was nothing in his mind now, not even more rhymes. He had a feeling he had lost something. No, he *must* believe! He must keep on believing that somehow he was going to reach Kristie, that this was the way he would find her.

The flickering steadied into a hazy figure which slowly grew more solid and brighter. The Rhyming Man! Lew shifted from one foot to the other. He sensed that this was a most important moment. He would reach Kristie now or never. And he must believe he would make it.

*"Eeery, Orrey, Ickery, Ann—"*

This time the song was only a ghostly whisper. The features of the Rhyming Man were not clear to Lew. He tried to see the stranger better and forced himself to believe he could.

As Lew concentrated, the Rhyming Man's face grew more distinct. The boy could make out the eyes now, and then a mouth shaping the nonsense words which must have a necessary meaning.

*"Fillison, Follison, Nicholas John.*
*Queevy, Quavey, English Navy."*

The Rhyming Man was still a little hazy. But his long arm was rising jerkily and his outstretched finger pointed straight at the boy.

*"Out—goes—you!"*

Lew heard the hoarse whisper. He saw the pointed finger level at his head. This was the way to Kristie! It was, he willed, it was!

There was the feeling that he was falling or flying. Lew could not tell which. He was afraid, but still he held on to the belief. This was the way to Kristie, the only way. *Believing must be seeing!*

He dropped on something softer than the pavement on which he had been standing.

"Lew!"

Opening his eyes, he saw her. He held out his arms as Kristie flung herself upon him, pushing him back against the ground. This—this was indeed Kristie. But where were they?

"Outside, Lew, we're Outside!" Her voice was joyful. She held Lew as if she would never let him go again.

Outside? Although there were no streetlamps here, there was still light. What light?

"The moon, Lew." Kristie pointed to a bright ball in the dark sky. "There are stars, too. And the Rhyming Man told me:

*'Star light, star bright,*
*First star I see tonight,*
*I wish I may, I wish I might,*
*Have the wish I wish tonight.'*

"I wished you'd come, Lew. And you did!"

The boy shook his head as if to bring his whirling thoughts to order. He was sure he had not said a word since he had found Kristie. Yet she knew what he was thinking. How could she?

Now she laughed. " '*Believing's seeing,*'" she repeated. "When we come Outside, we can understand what people think. It's true, Lew, it's really true!"

He felt as if his head were still in a dizzy whirl. Kristie had gotten to her feet, but she still held on to his hand. Now she tugged, pulling him up. When Lew was standing, she caught up Reddy.

Lew looked around wonderingly. Outside? But Outside was dead, poisoned. No one could live Outside.

"They can now." Again Kristie had read his thoughts. "When the people went Inside, the dead world began to change. The good came back. Look, Lew—" She pointed to something behind him.

Lew turned. There was a black, ugly blot on the land.

"That's the city, that's Inside," Kristie told him. "We can't go back—ever. But maybe the rest can come out. I'm going to try to *think* Fanna out. If you help me, Lew, maybe we can. I thought about you and got you out."

"Where—" for the first time he spoke. He had reached out and twitched a leaf from a twig on the bush beside him. It was real; he could feel it between his fingertips.

"It's all real!" Kristie agreed. "We're in London Town. That's what Lisa and the rest call it. Because of the bridge—" "What bridge?" Lew still felt as if he were struggling in the midst of a dream. "London Bridge. We're to build it up again. We're the stones, you see—

*"Build it up with stone, my dears,*
*It will stand a thousand years."*

"We just have to be careful and not do what the Olds did before. We have to keep the Outside as it is now and not try to make it like Inside. That's so ugly." Kristie made a face in

the direction of the city.

"The Rhyming Man—" Lew said. "Who is the Rhyming Man and why—"

Moonlight shimmered and formed a figure. In this softer light the Old's clothing glittered again as he bowed to them.

"This time I didn't *think* you," Kristie said. "You must be real. And, you see, you were wrong—Lew did come!"

He nodded and smiled at them both.

*"When Little's Big,*
*The time has come*
*For men to cast*
*Their final sum."*

Kristie shook her head. "I don't know what that means. And I can't read what you are thinking."

Still smiling, he shook his head with the same vigor as he had nodded. Lew watched him narrowly.

"You mean this is a second chance for us and there won't be another?"

This time the Rhyming Man nodded.

"Who are you?" Lew pressed. "And why—?"

The Rhyming Man raised his finger to his lips as if Lew were a Little who must be warned into silence.

But a thought stirred in the boy's mind. Perhaps the Rhyming Man was not a real Old after all. Perhaps long ago those in the city had hoped that Outside would be free someday. There were machines which were as strange as the blocks which answered to dancing and rhymes.

Could a machine also have the appearance of a man—say a Rhyming Man?

Only, as Lew looked into those very wise eyes watching him so keenly, he no longer cared who or what the Rhyming Man was. That he existed at all was the important thing.

The Rhyming Man gave a high hop and a very wide smile as if he approved of the direction Lew's thoughts had taken. Now he pointed down the slope to where "London Town" lay by the brook.

*"Good night.*
*Sleep tight.*
*Wake up bright,*
*In the morning light.*
*To do what's right,*

*With all your might!"*

He winked out as if he were a light which had been turned off.

"Come on," Kristie tugged again at Lew's hand. "We've got such a lot to do tomorrow. We must get Fanna out and the others—everyone that we can."

Lew laughed. He felt so free. This was Outside, not Inside.

"I know." He started down the slope with her. "There's London Bridge to build.

Strong enough to stand for a thousand years."